



Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder

Marsha M. Linehan

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For the average clinician, individuals with borderline personality disorder (BPD) often represent the most challenging, seemingly insoluble cases. This volume is the authoritative presentation of dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), Marsha M. Linehan's comprehensive, integrated approach to treating individuals with BPD. DBT was the first psychotherapy shown in controlled trials to be effective with BPD. It has since been adapted and tested for a wide range of other difficult-to-treat disorders involving emotion dysregulation. While focusing on BPD, this book is essential reading for clinicians delivering DBT to any clients with complex, multiple problems.

Companion volumes: The latest developments in DBT skills training, together with essential materials for teaching the full range of mindfulness, interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, and distress tolerance skills, are presented in Linehan's *DBT® Skills Training Manual, Second Edition*, and *DBT® Skills Training Handouts and Worksheets, Second Edition*. Also available: Linehan's instructive skills training videos for clients--*Crisis Survival Skills: Part One*, *Crisis Survival Skills: Part Two*, *From Suffering to Freedom*, *This One Moment*, and *Opposite Action*.

Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder Details

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Matt says

It almost took me ten months to finish this book. It is fairly dry and tedious, although the points that Linehan makes are excellent. Throughout the book you can feel the empathy and compassion she has for some of the most troubled people in the world. I think she does a nice job of taking some dry behavioral research (operant conditioning, classical conditioning) and explaining how to apply it to humans.

Throughout the book, you get the sense that DBT in itself is really a synthesis between the clinical behaviorism of Skinner and the empathic client-centered humanism of Rogers. As a therapist who practices relational therapy (influenced by psychodynamic and existential tenets), I struggled at times with the more behavioral end of Linehan's paradigm. That being said, it does seem helpful in providing containment, and behavioral shifts for the most traumatized patients. As a whole, I tend to reject the medical model, but believe that Linehan's treatments can inform any good therapy for someone that is chronically distressed. One of the things I like the most about the model is the therapist serving as a consultant to the patient, and helping them learn to maneuver through systems and manage their affect when these systems tend to be unhelpful and nonresponsive (as systems often are).

I do have questions about how one manages to do this when systems are both unhelpful and nonresponsive, and are partly in place to keep the status quo (i.e. to not provide adequate care to those most in need). Perhaps this is a pessimistic view of systems. Linehan does acknowledge that invalidation is largely a part of the person who has Borderline Personality Disorder's experience particularly when it comes to family of origin, sexism and other larger systems, but I am curious when we stop helping clients to manage challenging systems, and begin to create a more humane society.

Juletta Gilge says

I read this one for school, but this was an amazing read to gain insight into this therapy.

Devon says

More than just a book about treating Borderline Personality Disorder, this is *the* book about Dialectical-Behavioural Treatment (DBT). I didn't realize that when I started to read, but it wasn't an unpleasant surprise by any means.

This is an academic text and is heavy, ponderous, and dry in many places. I'm not a stranger to texts like these, and so was not bothered by it, though it did make for slower going. Other readers might find it hard to get through because of this alone. The second half becomes a bit repetitive, and the text very clearly addresses psychologists in detailing treatment approaches specific to DBT. I found the first part of the book – which describes BPD and its symptoms, and the philosophy and skeleton of DBT – to be the most useful.

This is probably the best text I've read on BPD, its symptoms, and ways to deal with them. And, because this

is an academic text, there isn't a lot of fluff or padding (which often distracts from the meat of the text in other books).

McKnight says

I always see a project through to the end.
I easily tolerate being outside of my comfort zone.
I'm good at finding solutions when none seem to exist.

Wendy Reiersen says

This book is not an easy read, but is well worth the effort. Dr. Linehan understands people with Borderline Personality Disorder, and how they got that way. If more of us understood emotional invalidation, and knew how to validate our children, ourselves, and each other, most mental illnesses as we know them would not exist.

Julie says

Just started reading this book. However, it's interesting to note that Dr. Marsha Linehan developed this style of therapy because she herself suffered from Borderline Personality Disorder. (BPD)

Her style of therapy is both Cognitive and Dialectical. (CBT and DBT) DBT is based on a model suggesting that both the cause and the maintenance of BPD is rooted in biological disorder combined with environmental disorder.

The fundamental biological disorder is in the emotion regulation system and may be due to genetics, intrauterine factors before birth, traumatic events in early development that permanently affect the brain, or some combination of these factors. The environmental disorder is any set of circumstances that pervasively punish, traumatize, or neglect this emotional vulnerability specifically, or the individual's emotional self generally, termed the invalidating environment.

The model hypothesizes that BPD results from a transaction over time that can follow several different pathways, with the initial degree of disorder more on the biological side in some cases and more on the environmental side in others. The main point is that the final result, BPD, is due to a transaction where both the individual and the environment co-create each other over time with the individual becoming progressively more emotionally unregulated and the environment becoming progressively more invalidating.

Emotional difficulties in BPD individuals consists of two factors, emotional vulnerability plus deficits in skills needed to regulate emotions.

The components of emotion vulnerability are sensitivity to emotional stimuli, emotional intensity, and slow return to emotional baseline.

"High sensitivity" refers to the tendency to pick up emotional cues, especially negative cues, react quickly,

and have a low threshold for emotional reaction. In other words, it does not take much to provoke an emotional reaction. "Emotional intensity" refers to extreme reactions to emotional stimuli, which frequently disrupt cognitive processing and the ability to self soothe. "Slow return to baseline" refers to reactions being long lasting, which in turn leads to narrowing of attention towards mood congruent aspects of the environment, biased memory, and biased interpretations, all of which contribute to maintaining the original mood state and a heightened state of arousal.

An important feature of DBT is the assumption that it is the emotional regulation system itself that is disordered, not only specific emotions of fear, anger, or shame. Thus, BPD individuals may also experience intense and unregulated positive emotions such as love and interest. All problematic behaviors of BPD individuals are seen as related to re-regulating out of control emotions or as natural outcomes of unregulated emotions.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy: The Treatment Model

DBT assumes the problems of BPD individuals are twofold.

First, they do not have many very important capabilities, including sufficient interpersonal skills, emotional and self regulation capacities (including the ability to self regulate biological systems) and the ability to tolerate distress.

Second, personal and environmental factors block coping skills and interfere with self regulation abilities the individual does have, often reinforce maladaptive behavioral patterns, and punish improved adaptive behaviors.

Helping the BPD individual make therapeutic changes is extraordinarily difficult, however, for at least two reasons. First, focusing on patient change, either of motivation or by teaching new behavioral skills, is often experienced as invalidating by traumatized individuals and can precipitate withdrawal, noncompliance, and early drop out from treatment, on the one hand, or anger, aggression, and attack, on the other. Second, ignoring the need for the patient to change (and thereby, not promoting needed change) is also experienced as invalidating.

This is the perfect handbook for any therapist who works with BPD or with people who have a difficult time regulating their emotional world.

Marilee says

I just ordered this from Amazon. I'm hoping it will give me some insight on a person I know who I'm convinced has borderline personality disorder. This book was recommended to me by a professional psychologist.

Angela Dawn says

How can I begin to describe the importance of this book and its workbook of the same title?
It's nothing less than revolutionary.

Clearly Dr. Linehan is making a life of the buddhist prayer
"May all sentient beings be freed from suffering"

And this is the key to the cage.

"I've been where you're hanging
I think I can see how you're pinned
When you're not feeling holy
your loneliness says that you've sinned"

Blessings to St. Marsha, Sister of Mercy,
She can bring you back from hell, through purgatory,
and leave you standing once again on the green and solid Earth.

If the old saint's battle cry was "Save souls"
this saint's mantra is "Save Lives"
She asks us only to accept reality, and teaches us all that can mean for our lives.

Morgan says

Extremely detailed and exhaustive yet informative. No need to read this unless it's your job.

Johna says

Marsha Linehan has articulated a very extraordinary mental disorder and the ways to overcome it in this ground breaking book. If one is unable to find trained mental health professionals for this particular problem, this book will help guide the untrained practitioner.

stephanie says

this is a little bit of a misleading title, as this is **THE book that founded DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy)**.

dbt was initially created for BPD clients, but happily, it's being spread to different populations.

it is a cognitive treatment, but it's more behaviorally based than on cognition. it's a blend of western and eastern thought, and i think it's the most successful therapy on the market for addictive behaviors (from self-injury to gambling to eating disorders) and even depression and anxiety.

i could go on forever, but basically there are four components: interpersonal effectiveness, emotion regulation, mindfulness, and distress tolerance. each section has a set of skills that are taught, so instead of just saying, yeah, that sucks, the client has something to DO that is not detrimental or self-harming in anyway. the treatment is incredibly validating of emotions, and of the pain that people feel in their lives. it just seeks to try and get rid of the suffering related to the pain, and to improve the lives

of its clients.

it's absolutely genius, i cannot emphasize enough how this radically changed my life - it's what made me decide to go into psychology instead of law. it clearly *likes* its clients, and treats them as intelligent people, instead of just saying, "if you think differently about this . . ."

seriously, it's brilliant, and it's kind of awesome to be around at the birth of a therapy that's eventually going to be one of the cornerstones of treatment. i mean, imagine being in frued's vienna and learning from him - that's how i feel about linehan. which, okay, maybe isn't the best analogy, but. it's just such a smart treatment.

Julia says

This book was fine, and DBT is obviously an enourmously effective therapy. I just wish that Linehan had put "manual" somewhere in the title, so I wouldn't have held out hope for so long that it would suddenly turn more fascinating than instructive (I probably unfairly judge fascination level by amount of clinical examples). She does, however, excel at writing clearly and without jargon.

Melanie says

I read this book and the manual of the same title because I enrolled in the comprehensive DBT program through UNR with Dr. Alan Fruzzetti. The text in this title is dry and probably only a good read for other professionals, unless you enjoy theory and repetitive information. Folks trying to help themselves or someone they know may prefer the workbook format. DBT is a highly specialized treatment and to be done properly it must be done with the help of a qualified therapist. DBT uses a series of skills to help client regulate their emotions and return to emotional baseline. Perhaps the the most refreshing aspect of this treatment is that it looks at a persons high emotional reactivity as a skills deficit; not having an environment that was validating enough for the client to build skills, over being 'crazy' as you will hear many clients say.

Peggy Rimbey stark says

DBT is an essential tool for your toolbox when dealing with individuals who have Borderline Personality.

Angela says

How can I begin to describe the importance of this book
and it's workbook of the same title?
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Clearly Dr. Linehan is making a life of the seminal Buddhist prayer
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What beautiful simplicity.
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